



**Rachel Carson Reserve  
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, November 7th, 2013, 10a-12p**

<b>LAC Members</b>	<b>Affiliation/Interest</b>	<b>Present</b>
Mr. Perry Barrow	Community Member	Yes
Mr. Charles Burgess	Town of Beaufort	No
Ms. Ann Carter	Community Member	Yes
Mr. John Fussell	Community Member	Yes
Ms. Margaret Garner	Community Member	No
Chief Steve Lewis	Beaufort Police Department	No
Mr. Randy Newman	Fort Macon State Park	Yes
Ms. Robin Newton	Reserve Volunteer	No
Dr. Dan Rittschof	Duke University Marine Lab	No
Mr. Stanley Rule	Community Member	Yes
Mr. Ben Wunderly	North Carolina Maritime Museum - Beaufort	Yes
<b>Others in Attendance</b>		
Paula Gillikin	DCM, Central Sites Manager	Yes
Rebecca Ellin	DCM, Reserve Manager	Yes
Kate Brogan	DCM, Communications Specialist	Yes

**Reserve Update (Rebecca Ellin, Kate Brogan)**

Administrative Update

- *Staffing News*
  - Kate Brogan was hired in May 2013 as the Reserve's temporary Communications Specialist. Kate is focusing on the Reserve website, social media, and public relations campaigns related to visitor use at Reserve sites.
  - Marie Davis was also hired in May 2013 as the Reserve's temporary Environmental Educator located in the Wilmington office. Marie is conducting a variety of general

public programming in the region, including on-site field trips, public presentations, and a paddling trip.

- Lori Davis, Education Coordinator for the Reserve, recently received the 2013 Environmental Educator of the Year Award from the Environmental Educators of North Carolina.

- *Budget Update*

The Reserve receives funding from both the State of N.C. and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for operation of the program and a budget update was provided for the current fiscal year. The Reserve's total budget for FY13-14 is \$877,653 (\$265,000 from State appropriations and \$612,653 from NOAA, 90% of the NOAA funds support operation of the N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve (NCNERR)); this is a \$34,754 reduction in federal funding for operation of the NCNERR and excludes any external competitive grant funds.

- *Rules and Policies Review Process*

The Reserve is not pursuing the update of its rules and policies at this time.

## Reserve Communications

### *Website*

- The Reserve is in the process of transferring its website to a new DENR hosting portal. This will help brand the Reserve as part of the Division of Coastal Management and establish consistency between DENR agencies, as well as providing more comprehensive and current information for website visitors in an easy-to-navigate format. The new website will be published in December 2013.
- The Hot Topics section of the current website is updated weekly to announce upcoming events/meetings, review projects and field trips, and establish a consistent "voice" for the Reserve that keeps website visitors excited about our work. The Hot Topics Archive can be found at the following link and will also be available on our new website:  
<http://www.nccoastalreserve.net/Resources/Hot-Topics-Archives/225.aspx>

### *Facebook*

- The Reserve has three Facebook pages: Rachel Carson, Masonboro Island, and a general N.C. Coastal Reserve page. Facebook is useful for interacting with visitors and community members that are interested in Reserve activities.
- The Facebook pages reach hundreds of people each day (range of people viewing a post between July and October 2013 for Rachel Carson: 250-2,200; N.C. Coastal Reserve: 89-1,300; and Masonboro Island: 470-5,000).

### *Newsletter*

- The Reserve redesigned its newsletter, the [Tidal Flat](#). The new version comes directly to your email inbox in a colorful new format.

#### Local Advisory Committee Operating Procedures

The Local Advisory Committee (LAC) Operating Procedures document was updated based on input from LAC members and staff, replacing the original version. No substantive changes were recommended by either LAC members or staff and thus, all changes are minor and serve to simplify or clarify without changing process or intent. The document you received is the final updated version with comments inserted to highlight the simplified or clarified language. A final PDF version without the comments will be emailed to committee members in December and posted on the Reserve website.

#### **Site Update - Old Business (Paula Gillikin)**

- The foot/entryway to the Carrot Island boardwalk has been difficult for visitors to access. To address this, a section of the railing on the side of the Carrot Island boardwalk was removed and now allows visitors to easily and safely access the boardwalk.
- At the previous LAC meeting, members were concerned about the potential increase in visitation due to the impending Park Service sole contract ferry service. Ferries that currently operate at Cape Lookout National Seashore may transition their business to the Rachel Carson Reserve. Paula explained how the Reserve wishes to understand the level and types of commercial use at the site by working directly with the users. The Reserve will continue to provide updated site and program information to local businesses (including commercial users), annually.

#### **Site Update - New Business (Paula Gillikin)**

- Education activities at the site since April 2013 included volunteer-led public field trips (116 participants), summer camps (111 participants), general outreach programs (187 participants), and K-college field trips (600 participants).
- Volunteers removed over 524 pounds of marine debris from the site.
- Camera monitoring was conducted at the main horse water hole to better understand how visitors use the area. Data reveals that it may be appropriate to post signs around this critical habitat to keep visitors from entering.
- Initial results of a visitor pet leash compliance study indicates that 12% of dogs are on leash.
- Volunteers and staff performed various bird surveys throughout the spring, summer, and fall. Oystercatcher productivity was higher than in recent years past. Seabird Ecological Network (SEANET) surveys continued throughout the year every two weeks. These surveys document beached birds and data is submitted to a database that houses SEANET data from the entire east coast.
- Staff and volunteers conducted a habitat accuracy assessment in the field to verify current habitat maps that were produced using aerial photography.

- Reserve intern, Forrest Kraus, carried out a diamondback terrapin survey project to test the feasibility of conducting rapid population assessments at night. More testing is needed to determine whether or not this method is appropriate for estimating terrapin populations. However, the study revealed that night-time captures of diamondback terrapins is feasible, as they turtles are briefly stunned in the water when spotlighted.
- There are current 33 feral horses on the island. One horse is showing signs that a visitor or visitors have been feeding him (illegal). Reserve staff are conducting behavior assessments of the horse to better understand the level of habituation. Signs that mirror the Park Service's new horse education/enforcement signs may be pursued for the Rachel Carson Reserve to deter visitors from inappropriately interacting with the horses.
- A "reggae barge party" was held at the site on June 22, 2013. Two bands on two barges drew a large crowd. Residents were upset and contacted Paula Gillikin. Regulatory staff from the Division of Coastal Management contacted the organizer to ensure that the barges were promptly removed.
- The nature trail improvement project is almost complete. A self guided interpretive brochure has been printed and will be available at the trailhead and through businesses who take passengers to the site.
- The Army Corps of Engineers completed a small dredging project at the east end of Taylor's Creek on July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013. Several thousand cubic yards of sediment were deposited in a cell on the east end of Carrot Island. Efforts were made to protect the fresh pond in the dredge cell, as horses rely on it for fresh water. However, it was contaminated by salt water during dredging operations. The Corps responded by mostly dewatering the area and providing a supplemental source of fresh water for the horses.

### **Member Roundtable and Other Comments**

- Members are very concerned that commercial use will significantly increase when one ferry company ( as opposed to the multiple providers that currently provide service) starts providing service to Cape Lookout National Seashore. This will occur in the Spring of 2014. Members suggest that one or more businesses will shift their activities to the Rachel Carson Reserve and the Reserve should take proactive steps (some type of authorization, tracking, or permitting system) to manage commercial use.
- Members agree that the main horse water hole is a critical habitat and needs to be protected by signs to keep visitors out. Signs made by school children (following the model of Audubon's Masons Inlet bird nest protection) interspersed with regulatory signs would likely be more effective than regulatory signs, alone.
- Members inquired if there is enough fresh water available to the horses, currently. Paula explained that there is plenty of food and water available to the horses, partly because the herd size is much smaller than it was when resources were scarce in the 1980s/90s.
- It is concerning that management issues (dogs off leash and public nudity) are occurring with no enforcement. Members agree that the Beaufort Police Department should be engaged in a formal way (scheduled patrols) to address visitor use issues. Although Paula and Perry are

willing to take the police to the island when an issue arises, this usually does not work out due to multiple factors.

- In response to the reggae barge party, members suggested that the Reserve should determine whether or not this kind of activity is appropriate and if not, regulate it.
- Members discussed the challenges of visitors using the trailhead area as a bathroom.

### **Public Comments**

- None

### **Action Items**

- Reserve staff will discuss idea making a formal request to the Town for law enforcement assistance during higher visitation periods.
- Reserve staff will continue to work on better understanding commercial use at the site.
- Paula will contact the committee to schedule a spring meeting date.
- Paula will begin the process of procuring signs to delineate the horse water hole.